



Nathan Deal
Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Reg Griffin
404-656-0239
reg.griffin@dec.al.ga.gov



**DECAL Alerts Child Care Programs & Parents
About Leaving Children in Vehicles**

Latest Incident of Child Left in a Vehicle for Hours was Monday in Macon

ATLANTA, Ga., (April 17, 2014) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is alerting child care providers and parents about the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles after a five-year-old child was allegedly left in a child care van in Macon on Monday for more than four hours. A similar incident in Jonesboro resulted in the death of a child in June 2011.

In a letter this week to nearly 6,000 child care programs and over 30,000 parents, Commissioner Bobby Cagle wrote, “The provider [in the recent incident in Macon] completed the transportation paperwork indicating that adults had checked the vehicle twice. I submit to you that if the vehicle had been carefully checked by two adults, that child would not had been left in the vehicle.”

Cagle said as a result of this week’s incident, DECAL is re-issuing the directive originally issued last summer: Comply FULLY with all rules involving transportation or be subject to enforcement actions. According to DECAL records, in FY2012, 21 children were left in vehicles by child care providers; 17 in FY2013; and already 18 in FY2014.

“DECAL will take swift and decisive action when providers fail to comply with rules governing transportation, and we will use our enforcement authority to ensure that this trend does not continue,” said Cagle. “I also intend to encourage criminal prosecution of those responsible for transporting children who fail to ensure that no children are left on the vehicle upon reaching their destination.”

Cagle is asking parents to serve as Georgia’s “eyes” in their communities and to contact local law enforcement if they ever see a child left unattended in a vehicle. “By carefully following the state’s transportation rules and by remaining vigilant when transporting children, we can help prevent senseless tragedies and keep Georgia’s children safe and healthy and their families intact.”

DECAL has posted more information about the safe transportation of children and the dangers of heatstroke on its website at www.dec.al.ga.gov.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia’s Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.